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On the identity of *Atheta opacicollis* (FAUVEL) (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae: Aleocharinae: Oxyopodini)

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A b s t r a c t : Types and additional material of *Atheta opacicollis* (FAUVEL, 1878) are revised. A lectotype is designated. The species is reported from Syria for the first time. Diagnostic characters distinguishing *A. opacicollis* from the similar *A. meybohmi* ASSING, 2011 are described and illustrated.

K e y w o r d s : Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, Aleocharinae, *Atheta*, Mediterranean region, lectotype designation.

Introduction

According to SMETANA (2004) and an update of this catalogue (SCHÜLKE unpublished), *Atheta opacicollis* (FAUVEL, 1878), a species originally described from several localities in North Africa and Iraq, has been recorded from North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt), Italy, and the Middle East (Iraq, Saudi Arabia). The sexual characters of this species have never been illustrated.

In the course of preparing contributions to the New Taxonomic Acts and Comments chapter in the new edition of the Palaearctic Catalogue, Jürgen Vogel (Görlitz) suspected that *Atheta meybohmi* ASSING, 2011, a species originally described from Turkey and Cyprus and subsequently reported also from the Greek island Rhodes (ASSING 2011, 2013), may be conspecific with *A. opacicollis*. In order to clarify the identity of *A. opacicollis* and the status of *A. meybohmi*, type material and additional specimens of *A. opacicollis* from the Fauvel collection were examined.

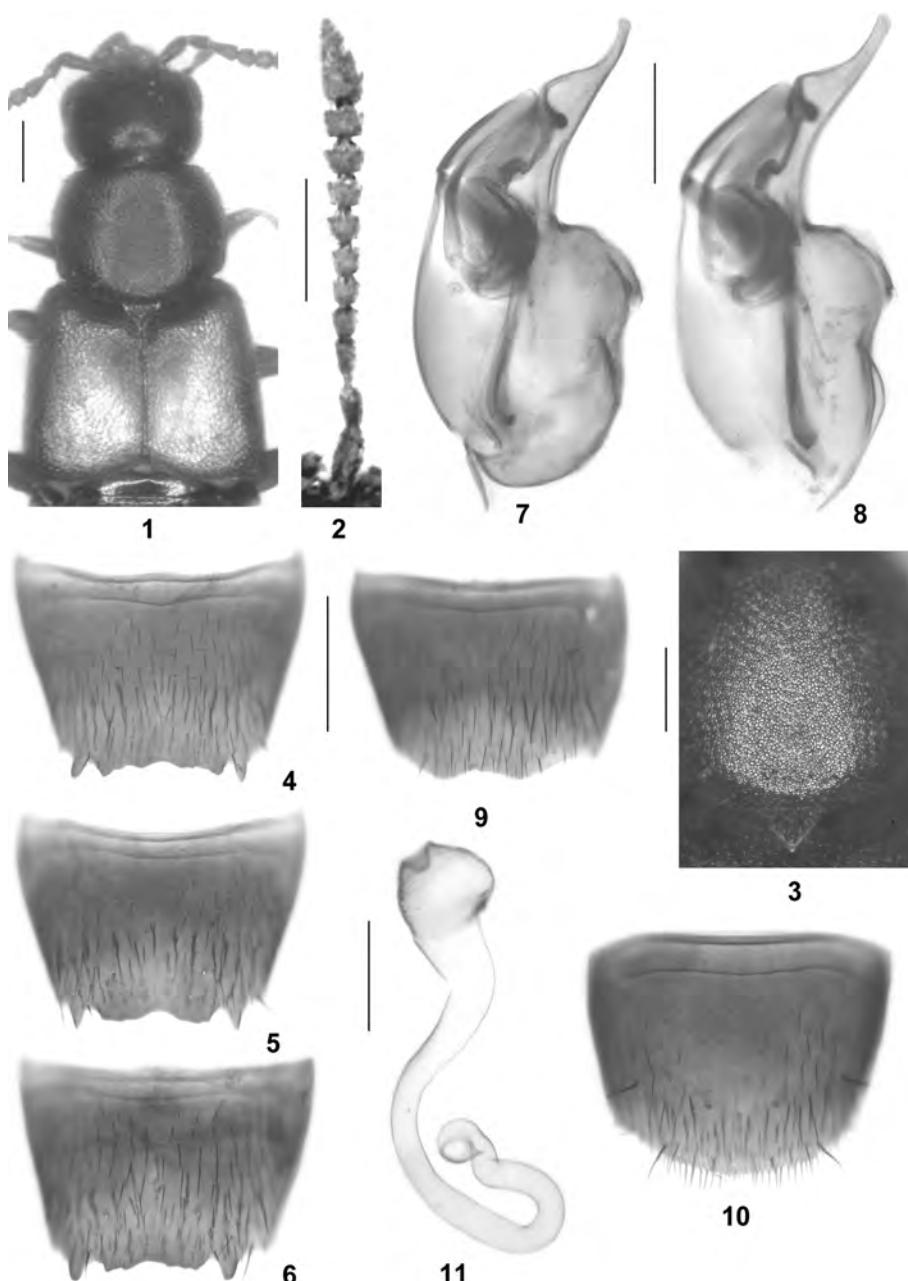
Material and methods

The material treated in this study is deposited in the following collections:

IRSNB..... Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique (Y. Gérard)

cAss..... author's private collection

The morphological studies were conducted using a Stemi SV 11 microscope (Zeiss Germany) and a Jenalab compound microscope (Carl Zeiss Jena). The images were created using a photographing device constructed by Arved Lompe (Nienburg) and CombineZ software, as well as a digital camera (Nikon Coolpix 995).



Figs 1-11: *Atheta opacicollis* (1, 3-4, 7: lectotype; 5, 8: Tébessa; 6: Aïn Sefra; 9-10: Theniet el Had; 11: Syria): (1) forebody; (2) antenna; (3) postero-median portion of pronotum; (4-6) male tergite VIII; (7-8) median lobe of aedeagus in lateral view; (9) female tergite VIII; (10) female sternite VIII; (11) spermatheca. Scale bars: 1-2, 4-6, 9-10: 0.2 mm; 3, 7-8, 11: 0.1 mm.

Results

Atheta opacicollis (FAUVEL, 1878) (Figs 1-11)

Homalota opacicollis FAUVEL, 1878: 140 f.

Type material examined: Lectotype ♂, present designation: "Batna / Coll. et det. A. Fauvel, Atheta opacicollis Fvl., R.I.Sc.N.B. 17.479 / Atheta opacicollis Fvl., det. R. Pace 1985 / Lectotypus ♂ *Homalota opacicollis* Fauvel, desig. V. Assing 2015 / Atheta opacicollis (Fauvel), det. V. Assing 2015" (IRSNB). Paralectotypes: 1♂: "Daya, 86 [?] / Coll. et det. A. Fauvel, Atheta opacicollis Fvl., R.I.Sc.N.B. 17.479 / Atheta opacicollis Fvl., det. R. Pace 1985 Lectotypus" (IRSNB); 1♂, 1♀: "Mésopotamie / Coll. et det. A. Fauvel, Atheta opacicollis Fvl., R.I.Sc.N.B. 17.479 / Atheta opacicollis Fvl., det. R. Pace 1985, Paralectotypus" (IRSNB); 1♂ [without head and pronotum]: "Biskra / incomplet / Coll. et det. A. Fauvel, Atheta opacicollis Fvl., R.I.Sc.N.B. 17.479 / Atheta opacicollis Fvl., det. R. Pace 1985, Paralectotypus" (IRSNB); 1♂: "♂ / Au Sud de Bou Sâada, R. Oberthür 1875 / opacicollis Fvl. / Coll. et det. A. Fauvel, Atheta opacicollis Fvl., R.I.Sc.N.B. 17.479 / Atheta opacicollis Fvl., det. R. Pace 1985, Paralectotypus" (IRSNB).

Additional material examined: Algeria: 1♂, 1♀ [both dissected prior to present study], Mecheria (IRSNB); 1♂, Ain Sefra [32°45'N, 35°09'E] (IRSNB); 1♂, Tébessa (IRSNB); 1♀, Theniet el Had (IRSNB). Syria: 5♂♂, 4♀♀, Azaz, cherry orchard, 19.IV.1996, leg. Sprick (cAss); 1♂, Al Saffiereh, arable land, 18.IV.1996, leg. Sprick (cAss); 1♀, Talajar, lentil field, 29.IV.1996, leg. Sprick (cAss); 2♀♀, NW Aleppo, S Midan, on flowering *Crataegus*, 22.IV.1996, leg. Sprick (cAss). Locality ambiguous or not identified: 1♀ [dissected prior to present study], "Makbesch Taâz pr. Agabah" [=Aqaba in Jordan?]; 1♀ [dissected prior to present study], "Gabès" [?].

Comment: The original description is based on an unspecified number of syntypes from "Daya, ...; Géryville, ...; Batna, Biskra ...; Aïn Ubala, sud de Bou-Saada.... ... Mésopotamie" (FAUVEL, 1878). Six syntypes were located in the Fauvel collection, five of which had been dissected and labelled as lectotype and paralectotypes, respectively, by Roberto Pace. To my knowledge, however, a lectotype designation has never been published. The type specimens and several of the additional specimens from the Fauvel collection that had been dissected prior to the present study are more or less significantly and irreversibly damaged, probably as a result of boiling or exposure to a chemical prior to dissection. (Such methods are most inadequate for the treatment of aleocharines.). Fortunately, one male syntype from Batna, which had apparently not been identified as a type specimen, was still undissected and in good condition. This specimen ("Batna") is designated as the lectotype.

An examination of the material of *A. opacicollis* revealed that this species is very similar to, but not conspecific with, *A. meybohmi*. *Atheta opacicollis* is distinguished from *A. meybohmi* by the pale-yellowish elytra (*A. meybohmi*: dark-yellowish), the shape of the head (*A. opacicollis*: lateral margins behind eyes subparallel in dorsal view, see Fig. 1; *A. meybohmi*: lateral margins behind eyes convexly curved towards posterior constriction), the shorter and more slender antennae (*A. opacicollis*: antennomere IV as long as broad or indistinctly transverse, antennomeres V-X moderately transverse, see Fig. 2; *A. meybohmi*: antennomeres IV-X distinctly transverse), the slightly less transverse pronotum (Fig. 1) with more pronounced microsculpture (Fig. 3), and by the sexual characters. In *A. opacicollis*, the (characteristic) posterior margin of the male tergite VIII (Fig. 4-6) is of slightly variable shape, but the lateral tooth on either side is more pronounced than in *A. meybohmi* and always distinctly separated from the median teeth (*A. meybohmi*: lateral tooth not distinctly separated; median denticles more numerous

and/or less pronounced; posterior margin between lateral teeth distinctly concave). The median lobe of the aedeagus (Figs 7-8) is of generally similar shape, but in *A. opacicollis* the ventral process is apically more slender, longer, and directed more apicad than in *A. meybohmi*, and the internal structures are much less strongly sclerotized and of different shape. Moreover, the posterior concavity of the female tergite VIII (Fig. 9) is more pronounced and narrower, and the proximal portion of the spermatheca (Fig. 11) is much longer and differently shaped in *A. opacicollis*. For illustrations of *A. opacicollis* and *A. meybohmi* see Figs 1-11 and ASSING (2011), respectively.

The specimens from Syria listed as additional material above represent new country records.

Acknowledgements

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Zusammenfassung

Typen und weiteres Material von *Atheta opacicollis* (FAUVEL, 1878) werden revidiert. Ein Lectotypus wird designiert. Die Art wird erstmals aus Syrien nachgewiesen. Differentialmerkmale, die *A. opacicollis* von der ähnlichen *A. meybohmi* ASSING, 2011 unterscheiden, werden beschrieben und abgebildet.

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